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"EFFECTING MEANINGFUL HUMANISTIC CHANGE IN A
TRADITIONAL SCHOOL SYSTEM FROM TWO VIEWS:
TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL"

BY

PHYLLIS DIGIACOMO DUNNAM

UNION GRADUATE SCHOOL

DECEMBER 31, 1978

PREVIEW

UMI Number: DP10579

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INTRODUCTION

When I entered the Union Graduate School doctoral program in August, 1975, I was teaching English and Media at W.B. Ray High School in the Corpus Christi Independent School District. Four years earlier, while at Hamlin Junior High School in the same district, I had begun my efforts to create a humanistic classroom. When I came to Ray in 1973, I designed and taught two original Junior English courses and also taught a class in filmmaking and videotape. (Together with three other teachers, I had been chosen by my district to go to New York City in July, 1973 to study media at the Center For Understanding Media.)

My years at Ray were both successful and satisfying. I was now convinced that high school curriculum and teaching methods needed drastic revision and began searching for ways to persuade CCISD administrators that the concept of alternative schools within a school district was a desirable and viable one. Joining with two colleagues, Kay Huestis and Kay Clower, I requested permission to conduct an in-service workshop where such a concept could be explored. Hopefully, we would then create a nucleus of educators and community members who would join with us in helping to bring about the changes we wished to achieve in the district.

It was at this point that I began my UGS studies, and it

was at the Maine Colloquium that my PDE began to take shape. I would return to CCISD and document my attempts to effect meaningful humanistic change there. Part I of my PDE does just that. However, after we gave two workshops that year, we were stopped in our tracks by an administration that, to us, seemed extremely threatened by our ideas. We were told to cease our efforts for change, and it became increasingly clear to me that, as a classroom teacher, I could not achieve any meaningful change.

Thus, I decided to become an administrator and see if I could have any deeper influence at that level. When I was offered a position as principal of the newly-formed high school at Port Aransas, Texas, with the opportunity to work with a superintendent, Dr. William Johnston, who shared my educational philosophy, I accepted. As a result of this decision, my originally planned document was now expanded to include my work in the Port Aransas Independent School District. Part II of my PDE recounts my experiences there from July, 1976 - August 1978.

PREFACE

No one in American today needs to have it pointed out that our schools are in a state of disarray. Parents and community are up in arms because so many students who graduate from high school cannot read or write well. Moreover, mounting numbers of failures in such areas as label reading, checkbook balancing, and credit financing have led adults to believe that our youth are leaving our schools with few, if any, skills essential to survival in the real world.

We educators have always been subject to criticism of one form or another, and in a democratic society of such diverse views and values as ours, we have expected it and dealt with it with as much good grace as we could muster and with varying degrees of success.

Today's criticism, however, is much more frightening because I believe it is rooted in a violent reaction to the humanistic reforms of the sixties and early seventies. The result has been a simplistic solution for all of our educational ills, spearheaded by the popular war cry: "Back to the basics!" When we despair of dealing with the monstrous ills of our age, we look to the past for comfort and advice.

Meanwhile, back in the schools, a tremendous amount of internal squabbling is taking place. The finger of blame is pointing in all directions. To wit:

.College teachers are blaming high school teachers for failing to teach students how to read or write on a level acceptable to them. In one junior college in my area, there are 24 sections of Remedial English being taught every semester.

.High school teachers meanwhile are muttering about the lack of skills displayed by the kids sent to them from junior high. In a neighboring city, where a Basic Skills test was given to 10th graders and 48% of them flunked, all eyes turned accusingly to the junior high.

.Junior high teachers are shouting epithets at their principals who, they say, insist on social promotions and tend to gloss over discipline problems so as to maintain a shining image at the central administration office.

.Elementary teachers complain that there are so many "extras" in the curriculum that there is little time left for teaching basic skills. They too accuse their principals of condoning social promotions.

.Principals respond defensively by citing the pressures put upon them by "downtown". Denied input into educational decisions, they feel that they are drowning in "special programs" which they have neither understood nor requested. They have become human buffer zones for all controversies, whether they be between parents and teachers, teachers and downtown, teachers and students, etc. In some cities this feeling of scapegoatism is so strong that there seems to be some behind-the-scenes maneuvering toward a principals' union. .Central Staff tend to remain aloof and disdainful of the criticism leveled at them. Often their attitude seems to say "We have the Big Picture. If teachers could know what we know and see what we see, they would understand our role better."

And so it goes--all over the country. It would seem that everyone is wrong, and everyone is right. No matter: the shibboleth of reactionary citizens is gaining strength--and I fear we are going to try to recapture some of the worst aspects of the (not so) good old days.

At this point, many people will say, "If she's going to give us some of that humanistic tripe, I don't want to hear it." If I add here that I admit some errors of those of us

who espouse the cause of freedom in education, I alienate those who are mounting the educational ramparts against the loud and persistent onslaughts of the reactionaries.

I ask each reader to withhold judgment and join me in an honest and soul-searching journey. In the pages that follow, I will share with you my experiences as an administrator in a small secondary school. I will "tell it like it is", (my apologies to the English purists...) with no jargon, no "educationese" to clutter up the meaning of the experience.

I set out on my journey to search for answers. I try to bridge the gap between the structured and constricted role of the administrator and that of the humanist who believes in the inherent strength and goodness of all men. In a sense, I become a healthy schizophrenic. If that be paradox, so be it.

Let us begin...

PROJECT DEMONSTRATING EXCELLENCE

TITLE: EFFECTING MEANINGFUL HUMANISTIC CHANGE IN A
TRADITIONAL SCHOOL SYSTEM FROM TWO VIEWS:
TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL.

PART I: EXPERIENCES IN CORPUS CHRISTI INDEPENDENT
SCHOOL DISTRICT - AUGUST 1975 - May 1976

PART II: EXPERIENCES IN PORT DIABLO* INDEPENDENT
SCHOOL DISTRICT - JULY 1976 - AUGUST 1978

PHYLLIS DIGIACOMO DUNNAM
UNION GRADUATE SCHOOL
DECEMBER 31, 1978

*Fictitious name used in Part II only.

PROJECT DEMONSTRATING EXCELLENCE

PART I: EXPERIENCES IN CORPUS CHRISTI INDEPENDENT SCHOOL SYSTEM - AUGUST 1975 - MAY 1976

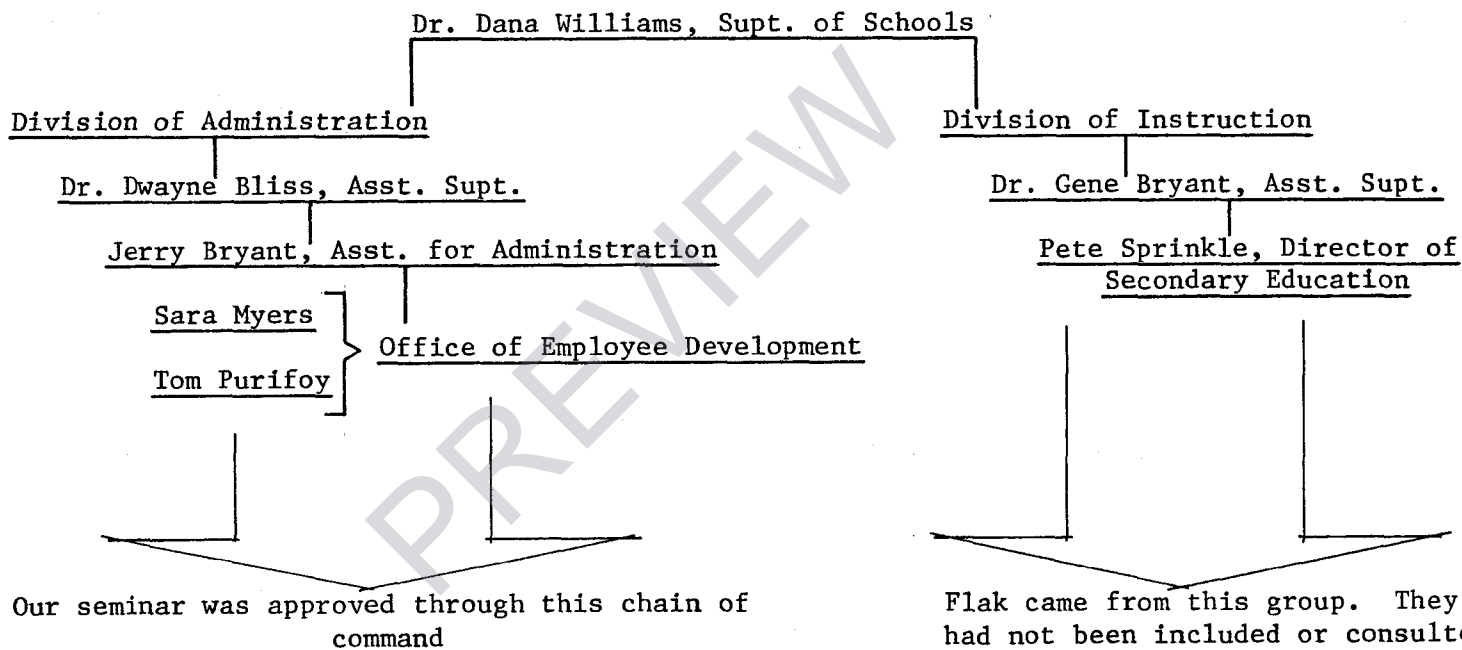
A. ORAL LOG - AUGUST 1975 - FEBRUARY 1976

B. WRITTEN LOG - AUGUST 1975 - JUNE 1976

1. CCISD ADMINISTRATION CHART
2. CCISD PERSONNEL LIST
3. SEMINAR MEMOS - PRE - NOVEMBER 1 SEMINAR
 - a. ORIGINAL ETP PROPOSAL - JANUARY 1975
 - b. SECOND ETP PROPOSAL - JULY 1975
 - c. ORIGINAL RATIONALE, INVITATION AND AGENDA - AUGUST 1975
 - d. THIRD ETP PROPOSAL - SEPTEMBER 1975
 - e. ADMINISTRATIVE LETTER ASKING FOR REVISED AGENDA - SEPTEMBER 1975
 - f. REVISED RATIONALE, INVITATION AND AGENDA - OCTOBER 1975
4. HANDOUTS AT NOVEMBER 1 SEMINAR
 - a. REVISED AGENDA
 - b. BIBLIOGRAPHY OF ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION READINGS
 - c. NEWSWEEK ARTICLE ON QUINCY SCHOOLS
 - d. ARTICLE ON SEA (SOUTHEAST ALTERNATIVES - MINNEAPOLIS)
 - e. FOLLOW-UP HANDOUT FOR PHASE II
5. REPORT ON ETP SEMINAR - NOVEMBER 1
 - a. NOTES FROM SEMINAR TAPES
 - b. LETTER - PHASE II
 - c. COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS - PHASE II
6. SECOND SEMINAR - FEBRUARY 7, 1976
 - a. LETTER TO EDMUND MARTINEZ
 - b. AGENDA
7. LETTER TO ROY FAIRFIELD - JUNE 6, 1976
(COVERS EVENTS OF MARCH - MAY 1976)

B1
CCISD ADMINISTRATION CHART

CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION CCISD



B2
CCISD PERSONNEL LIST

Cast of Characters
or
You Can't Tell the Players Without a Scorecard...

Sara Myers }
Tom Purifoy } Employee Development Office; they submitted our plan
for a seminar on exploring alternatives

Dr. Dwayne Bliss - Asst. Supt. for Administration; final o.k. for seminar
came from him

Jerry Bryant - Asst. for Administration; immediate superior of Tom
and Sara, directly under Dr. Bliss

Pete Sprinkle - Director of Secondary Education; directly under Dr.
Gene Bryant, Asst. Supt. for Instruction

Kay Huestis }
Kay Clower } teachers in CCISD; my colleagues in my attempt to achieve
alternative schools in C.C.

Dr. Ray Cross - Chairman, Dept. of Education, Corpus Christi State
University, Corpus Christi; former Professor of Ed. at
Univ. of Minnesota; consultant to SEA, Southeast Alternative
Schools, Minneapolis.

Sue Barlow - friend and media teacher; now videotape specialist for
Special Education Dept., CCISD

Ralph Olson - artist-in-residence; filmmaker provided by grant from
National Commission on Arts and Humanities (this grant
paid for Sue and me to go to New York in 1973 to study
filmmaking and videotape)

Bea Brandon - friend and media teacher; co-director with me of Texas
Student Film Festival

B3a
ORIGINAL ETP PROPOSAL - JANUARY 1975

EQUIVALENCY TIME PROGRAM PROPOSAL

Exploring and Creating Alternatives Within the Corpus Christi I. S. D.

Objective: This seminar will serve as Phase I for creation of educational alternatives not yet explored. Participants will include selected teachers, counselors, administrators and members of the community. At the close of the seminar, participants will set goals for implementing Phase II. Decisions made in Phase I will give direction for future development of educational alternatives. The designers of the seminar will present a written report on the accomplishments and decisions of the participants in Phase I.

Seminar Description: The Phase I Seminar will consist of two four-hour sessions. The requested dates are April 19 and 26, 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Prior to the first session, a written presentation of underlying philosophy will be sent to the participants. The first session will include:

1. A film to further present underlying philosophy and need for educational alternatives, followed by group discussion of film.

Break

2. Video Tape presentation of student point of view; discussion of video tape followed by short break.
3. Brief exposition by selected individuals followed by large group discussion of each of the following issues: (Dr. Cross of Texas A&I CC has agreed to moderate the large group discussion.)
 - a. Why create alternatives?
 - b. What are the restraints on creating alternatives (legal)?
 - c. What are some examples of existing alternatives?
 - d. What are the consequences of creating alternatives?

Break

4. Statement of goals for second four-hour session.

The second session will include:

1. Small group simulation activity to address the following areas: (Participants will be divided into three groups according to grade levels.)
 - a. Curriculum
 - b. Methods
 - c. Scheduling and Student Supervision
 - d. Finance (cost per student ratio)
 - e. Administration

Break

2. Reports from each of the three groups to total group.

3. Ascertain commitment of participants to pursue Phase II (including possibility of involving additional people; organizing on-going committees research over the summer; and a reconvening in Fall.)

PREVIEW

B3b
SECOND ETP PROPOSAL - JULY 1975

EQUIVALENCY TIME PROGRAM PROPOSAL

Exploring and Creating Alternatives Within the Corpus Christi I.S.D.

Objective: This seminar will serve as Phase I for creation of educational alternatives not yet explored. Participants will include selected teachers, counselors, administrators and members of the community. At the close of the seminar, participants will set goals for implementing Phase II. Decisions made in Phase I will give directions for future development of educational alternatives. The designers of the seminar will present a written report on the accomplishments and decisions of the participants in Phase I.

Seminar Description: The Phase I seminar will consist of two four-hour sessions. The requested dates are two successive Saturday mornings in the first quarter (9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.). Prior to the first session, a written presentation of underlying philosophy will be sent to the participants. The first session will include:

- (1) A film to further present underlying philosophy and need for educational alternatives, followed by group discussion of film.
Short break...
- (2) Videotape presentation of student point of view
Short break...
- (3) Brief exposition by selected individuals followed by large group discussion of each of the following issues: (The large group discussion will be moderated by Dr. Cross of Texas A&I Corpus Christi).
 - A. Why create alternatives?
 - B. What are some restraints on creating alternatives (legal)?
 - C. What are some examples of existing alternatives?
 - D. What are the consequences of creating alternatives?Short break...
- (4) Statement of goals for second four-hour session.

The second session will include:

- (1) Small group simulation activity to address the following areas: (Participants will be divided into three groups according to grade levels.)
 - A. Curriculum
 - B. Methods
 - C. Scheduling and Student Supervision

- D. Finance (cost per student ratio)
- E. Administration

Short break

- (2) Reports from each of the three groups to total group
- (3) Ascertain commitment of participants to pursue Phase II (including possibility of involving additional people; organizing on-going committees; research during the school year; and a re-convening later in the school year).

Proposal Submitted By:

Phyllis Dunnam, B.A., M.A., Ray H.S.
Kay Huestis, B.A., Browne JHS
Kay Clower, B.A. Fisher

Date July 15, 1975

B3c
ORIGINAL RATIONALE, INVITATION AND AGENDA - AUGUST 1975

August 1, 1975

Dear Friends of Education:

Last spring we worked on a proposal for a seminar to address the subject of exploring and creating alternative forms of education within the Corpus Christi school system. The participants will include teachers, counselors, principals, administrators, school board members, university professors and interested community members. Participants have been invited based on a common interest in exploring and creating alternatives within our own educational system. Teachers who participate will be able to claim in-service time as an Equivalency Time Program.

We are pleased to announce that on July 15, 1975, Dr. Dwayne Bliss, Assistant Superintendent, approved the proposed seminar. Most of you were contacted last spring and expressed an interest in participating in such a seminar. This letter will serve as your formal invitation and our first effort to determine a date most agreeable to all of us.

The seminar is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, November 1, 1975, 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. An agenda of the day's activities is attached along with a statement of underlying philosophy and a list of invited participants. Please check your calendar and return the enclosed post card as soon as possible.

We hope you will be able to join us in what we think will be an exciting and creative experience. We will be in touch again before the seminar to confirm the date and place.

Sincerely,

Phyllis Dunnam, Ray High School

Kay Clower, Fisher Elementary

Kay Huestis, Alternative Education Center

EXPLORING AND CREATING ALTERNATIVES

SEMINAR AGENDA

8:30 - 9:30	Introductions and Coffee
9:45 - 10:45	Film
10:45 - 11:00	Group Discussion
11:00 - 11:30	Videotape - Local Students' Input
11:30 - 12:00	Discussion
12:00 - 1:00	Lunch Break
1:00 - 2:00	15 minute oral presentations on the following topics: (1) Why create alternatives? (2) What are some restraints (legal) on creating alternatives? (3) What are some examples of existing alternatives? (4) What are the consequences of creating alternatives?
2:15 - 4:15	Simulation Activity
4:15 -	Projected Plans for Phase II

NATIONALE FOR EXPLORATION OF EDUCATIONAL ALTERNATIVES

The burden of trying to teach all kinds of children through the same kinds of schools has become unmanageable. We believe the time has come to develop different kinds of schools for varying kinds of learning styles. Our purpose in exploring educational alternatives is not a sudden shift in emphasis or procedures; rather a gradual, yet decisive move toward schools that are based on important developing educational values and considerations. Our hope is that the schools of the future will increasingly embody the following values and trends:

A. School Environment

1. --a school environment which tries to fit the school to the learner rather than the learner to the school; emphasis on pluralism, diversity, and the acceptance of ambiguity;
2. --an increase in the variety and number of experiences which are seen as part of the schooling process; the school viewed as a center for organizing, integrating, and reflecting on student learning experiences no matter what their source (e.g. television, family, outside educational agencies, work or service experiences);
3. --the school will remain a structured context which students will move in and out of with greater openness and freedom; stress on the development of student responsibility with the use of guidelines and counseling supervision;
4. --greater development of self-competition and cooperation;
5. --physical arrangements which encourage informality, freedom of movement, a variety of possible learning groupings;
6. --movement toward participation; fuller student and faculty involvement in the decision-making processes in areas in which they possess competence, immediate knowledge, and responsibility.

B. Educational Processes

1. --vision of the school as a center where students "learn how to learn";
 - a. --the capacity to analyze and evaluate divergent and competing life styles, ideologies and values;
 - b. --the ability to confront as yet undetermined intellectual and social problems;
 - c. --a basic self-reliance and capacity to adapt to an emerging world;
 - d. --ability to gain new skills;